

LIFE GROUPS

The Armor of God– Ephesians 6:10-20

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

ICE BREAKER QUESTION: Growing up, what did you think about church? How does this thinking influence you now?

While many of our thoughts about how we'd like church to be aren't necessarily right or wrong, the Bible outlines the purpose and functions of church.

Read back through the passage before going through the questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What is your biggest takeaway? How was your experience with the Life Tool's this past week?**
- 2. What is the connection between Christ and the church? How does the church accomplish God's plan?**

Paul knew that a person could not grow in Christ unless he or she had people around them who could equip and encourage as the person grew in Christ. This is part of God's plan, He made the church to be the body of Christ that is the means by which a person can be devoted to Christ.

- a. How can knowing the purpose of the church be helpful when you invite others to join you at church or in small group?

3. Read Ephesians 6:13-17. What are the spiritual realities that coincide with the soldier's belt, breast plate, boots, shield, helmet, and sword? Which parts are defensive weapons? Offensive?

Paul says that *truth* performs this crucial function in spiritual warfare. Truth holds the spiritual armor in place and safeguards against deadly entanglements¹

There is objective, spiritual truth in Jesus and his Scriptures: truth about God, ourselves, history, and the future. Without it we do not have a chance in the spiritual battles which come our way.

Without cinching ourselves tightly with the truth of Scripture, the other weapons of our warfare will clatter in disarray. Those who have stood firm as great warriors for Christ have been men and women of the Word and so were filled with the eternal truth of Scripture.²

We must fill ourselves with the truth of God's Word and then consciously submit to it, so we will be instinctively truthful. We must determine to be truthful, honest, sincere people.³

"The breastplate of righteousness" is God's own righteousness freely given to those who truly believe in Jesus Christ. It is not something which we generate on our own.⁴

The breastplate of righteousness is received and put on through faith as God gives us his righteousness. He clothes us through his Son, Jesus Christ — "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). It is what theologians call *imputed righteousness*. If you do not have this righteousness, nothing can save you; but if you have it, you are safe for eternity!⁵

¹ R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 224.

² R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 224.

³ R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 226.

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 227.

⁵ R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 227.

The “readiness” of our text pictures us being ready with our *caliga* firmly planted on solid ground. Thus established, the enemy is not going to be able to push us back. Rather, we are set to advance.

The spiritual lesson here is perfectly clear. It is “the gospel of peace” — the peace that comes to us in and through the gospel and makes us immovable in battle⁶

This is the picture Paul presents us: As we are battling in warfare, the enemy launches repeated volleys of blazing arrows — temptations, strategies, deceptions — to inflame us and bring our demise. But up come our shields of faith (*as we trust God and his Word*) into which hot arrows thud harmlessly.⁷

In Isaiah, God’s helmet of salvation is what he *does*; in Ephesians, it is what he *gives*.

“The helmet of salvation” is the assurance of salvation and the resulting confidence it brings. A helmet is a confidence-builder⁸

The last part of verse 17 enjoins us to “Take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” The Holy Scriptures are originated by the breath of the Spirit of God (2 Timothy 3:16) and thus are “the sword of the Spirit.” In reference to this text, Oliver Cromwell’s soldiers, his “Ironsides,” fought with a sword in one hand and a Bible in the other. This was a pious gesture, but hardly what the Scripture suggests!

What we are to understand is that when we take up God’s Word to fight spiritual warfare, we have the weapon *par excellence* for defensive and offensive battle.⁹

4. READ EPHESIANS 6:18-20. What role does prayer play in accessing the armor of God? How does prayer prepare us to resist the evil in this world?

Paul may have meant for prayer to be understood as another piece of spiritual armor. Regardless, prayer is needed for appropriating and using all the armor of God. Each piece of armor must carefully be put on with prayer, drawing upon God’s power. This prayer is

⁶ R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 232.

⁷ R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 234.

⁸ R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 241.

⁹ R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 242.

Spirit-energized, Spirit-enabled, and Spirit-directed. Praying in the Spirit is an admission of a believer's ignorance and dependence on God.

Those who would engage in spiritual warfare, regardless of how well they wear *truth* and *righteousness* and *faith* and *salvation*, regardless of how well they are grounded in *peace*, regardless of how well they wield the *Word*, must make *prayer* the first thing. The Christian soldier fights on his knees! As Edward Payson said: "Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, the third thing necessary to minister. Pray, therefore, my dear brother, pray, pray, pray." This is what the apostle wanted us to see by making prayer the seventh item of armament, for seven is the Biblical number for perfection and completion.¹⁰

Unless I'm badly mistaken, one of the main reasons so many of God's children don't have a significant life of prayer is not so much that we don't want to, but that we don't plan to. If you want to take a four-week vacation, you don't just get up one summer morning and say, "Hey, let's go today!" You won't have anything ready. You won't know where to go. Nothing has been planned.

But that is how many of us treat prayer. We get up day after day and realize that significant times of prayer should be part of our life, but nothing's ever ready. We don't know where to go. Nothing has been planned. No time. No place. No procedure. And we all know that the opposite of planning is not a wonderful flow of deep, spontaneous experiences in prayer. The opposite of planning is the rut. If you don't plan a vacation you will probably stay home and watch TV! The natural unplanned flow of spiritual life sinks to the lowest ebb of vitality. There is a race to be run and a fight to be fought. If you want renewal in your life of prayer you must plan to see it.¹¹

5. What's the difference between memorizing God's Word and knowing how to use God's Word as an offensive weapon when Satan attacks?

In their culture, the Ephesians would have been familiar with armor, as the Roman guards were visible all over the empire. Paul used a familiar sight as an analogy for the Christian life and the battle we must all fight. When we accepted Christ, we joined an army of Christian soldiers. We can trust that we haven't been sent into battle unprepared. God has given us everything we need, but we must choose to utilize the things He's supplied to keep us safe.

¹⁰ R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 247–250.

¹¹ R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 257.

Cranmer, one-time fellow of Jesus College, went on to become Archbishop of Canterbury (1553) and a martyr of the Church.

Cranmer was a man of the Word. This is his collect for the second Sunday of Advent:

Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant that we may in such wise hear them read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Let us grip the sword firmly through diligent study!¹²

6. Why is it a struggle to keep our spiritual armor on at all times? Which piece of armor do you need to focus on the most? How can you grow in that area this week?

We are at war, and there is a sense in which warfare is to be our occupation, avocation, and preoccupation. We must always be in armor. We must sleep in it and, though wearing it, still put it on daily: the belt of *truth* — the breastplate of *righteousness* — the gospel boots of *peace* — the shield of *faith*. Are they in place? Then we must reverently and joyfully take the helmet of *salvation* from our Savior's pierced hand. Slip it on. Straighten up. Stand tall with imperial confidence — "without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you ... a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved" (Philippians 1:28). Now we must reach out our hand and "Take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the *word of God*" and raise it to him in worshipful salute.

Valiant-for-truth: "I fought till my sword did cleave to my hand. And then they were joined together as if a sword grew out of my arm, and when the blood run through my fingers, then I fought with most courage."

Great-heart: "Thou hast done well; thou hast resisted unto blood, striving against sin. Thou shalt abide by us, come in and go out with us; for we are thy companions."

Soldiers of Christ, arise and put your armor on! ¹³

¹² R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 246.

¹³ R. Kent Hughes, [*Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ*](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 246.

7. READ 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-22. As we think about the Lords Supper, why is our unity and commitment to the church so important? How have you experienced unity and commitment in the church?

When the Christians in Corinth gathered to celebrate the Lord's Supper, they lost sight of its purpose. There was little unity. The wealthy members refused to share their food. Some had even turned the Lord's Table into a drunken party. Ultimately, the divisions among the Corinthian believers were dishonoring to God. Because real love involves the whole family of God, Paul would not allow such division to continue.

Perhaps if our churches intentionally recovered the communitarian focus of the Lord's Supper, we might have less and less need for professional conflict resolution experts called in to consult with us on how to overcome our divisions. After all, for Jesus and for the Apostle Paul, the starting point for unity in the church, and for the sanctification of the Body together, was a common gospel and a common table. It could be again.

In order to get community right, we must reclaim communion.

- Russell Moore

8. Why do we celebrate the Lord's Supper as a church family, and not as individuals? How does the Lord's Supper encourage biblical community?

As we serve the table of Christ's communion each week, we are calling the church to a different kind of community. The kind of community that cannot be dissolved by petty conflict or disagreement. As we eat together around the table of Christ, we're called to a recognition that we are at the table of a kingdom. And we are called there to recognize the presence of the King — not so much in the elements themselves or in our individual spiritual reflection but in the body he has called together, a body of sinners like us. Only then will we really get what the Scriptures mean when they call us to "fellowship."

- Russell Moore

"The Scriptures encourage us to "look" in a number of directions with the eyes of faith as we share in the Lord's Supper.⁶ First, we are to look *back* with gratitude to Jesus and his death at the cross (1Cor. 11:24). Next, we are to look *around* at the body of believers with whom we share the Supper. It is something we do as we come together (v. 17) and discern the body of Christ (v. 29) as we eat. It is significant that we share this meal as a community, and do not partake of it individually in our homes. Sharing the one bread together is a sign of our

fundamental unity (1Cor. 10:17). We also look *up* to heaven, where the risen and ascended Christ intercedes for us as our great High Priest (*cf.* Heb. 4:14-16). Finally, we look *forward* to the day when Jesus will return (1Cor. 11:26). The celebration of the Supper serves as a proclamation of Jesus' death which anticipates his return. Jesus himself, when he instituted the Supper, ate it in anticipation of the future (Matt. 26:29). The ultimate outworking of God's salvation plan has long been associated with the promise of a great banquet (Isa. 25:6; *cf.* Rev. 19:9). The Lord's Supper serves as a foretaste of that great banquet, even as it reminds us of the only basis of our hope for participating in it"

- Jonathan Griffith

PRAYER

Pray that God would open your eyes to the reality of the spiritual war taking place all around you. As a group, join together and hold each other accountable and support each other. We weren't created to fight this battle alone, so get to know who is fighting with you.



FURTHER STUDY

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-weapon-serves-the-wielding-power>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/sermon/the-christian-in-complete-armor-ephesians-6-10-20/>

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/the-armor-of-god>

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/family-supper-reclaiming-community-through-communion>